



**Epi Update for Friday, November 30, 2018  
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)  
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

**Items for this week's Epi Update include:**

- **National Influenza Vaccination Week: December 2-8**
- **2017-2018 influenza season listed as high severity for all age groups**
- **November marks the start of peak norovirus season**
- **In the news: How to turbocharge flu protection (llamas required)**
- **In the news: One-third of U.S. parents plan to skip flu shots for their kids this season**
- **In the news: Why is wombat poop cube-shaped?**
- **Infographic: Influenza vaccination for HCP**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

**National Influenza Vaccination Week: December 2-8**

National Influenza Vaccination Week highlights the importance of influenza vaccination and presents an excellent opportunity to vaccinate patients who have not yet been protected against influenza. It is never too late to vaccinate!

Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. CDC has many resources available to promote National Influenza Vaccination Week available at [www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/nivw/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/nivw/index.htm).

Additionally, the Immunization Action Coalition has a tip sheet, *Communicating the Benefits of the Seasonal Influenza Vaccine* available at [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3115.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3115.pdf).

**2017-2018 influenza season listed as high severity for all age groups**

In 2017, CDC adopted a new methodology to determine flu season severity. This method uses a model to estimate the numbers of influenza illnesses, medical visits, hospitalizations and deaths in the U.S. based on data from past seasons. CDC used these estimates to classify severity from the 2003-2004 through the 2017-18 influenza seasons. Four seasons were classified as low severity and eight as moderate. Both the 2014-15 and 2017-18 influenza seasons were classified as high severity. No season was listed as very high severity.

For more information about how CDC classifies the severity of influenza seasons, visit [www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/classifies-flu-severity.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/classifies-flu-severity.htm).

**November marks the start of peak norovirus season**

IDPH, alongside local public health partners, SHL and DIA, have investigated several norovirus outbreaks recently linked to restaurants, nursing homes, weddings and family gatherings.

Although norovirus circulates year round, cases and outbreaks tend to peak from November through April. Norovirus is extremely infectious – ingesting as few as 18 viral particles can

cause someone to get sick. The virus spreads easily via contaminated food and surfaces, or directly from person to person.

Remind patients experiencing vomiting and diarrhea to stay home while ill and not prepare food for others. Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of norovirus, which can remain in the stool of an infected individual for two weeks or more after symptoms resolve. Hand sanitizer is not as effective as hand washing for norovirus. Surfaces contaminated by ill individuals should be cleaned thoroughly with bleach-based products, as other products may not be effective against norovirus.

For more information about norovirus, visit [www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html).

**In the news: How to turbocharge flu protection (llamas required)**

[www.nytimes.com/2018/11/01/science/flu-vaccinations.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/01/science/flu-vaccinations.html)

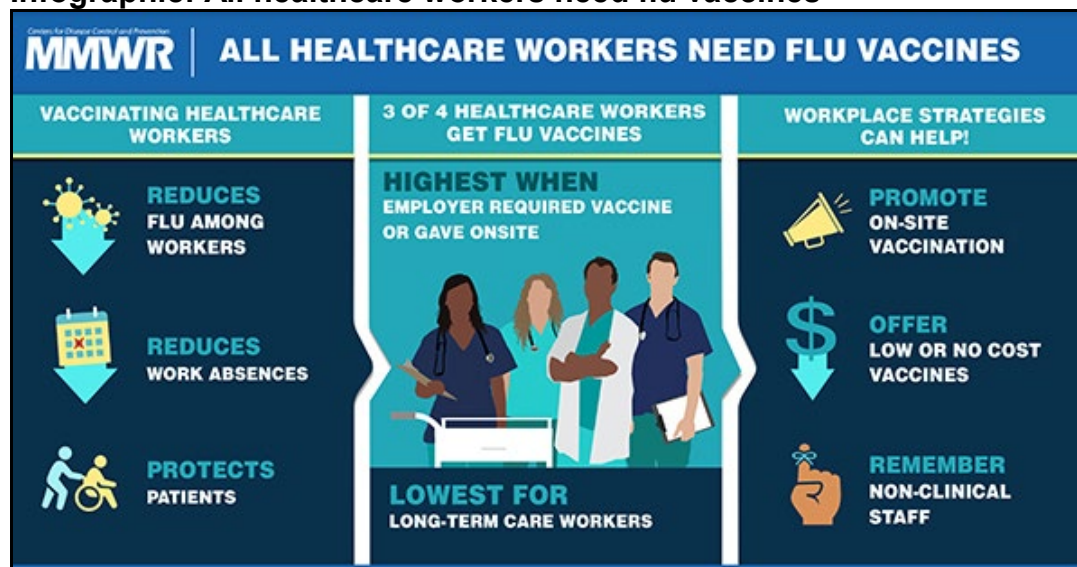
**In the news: One-third of U.S. parents plan to skip flu shots for their kids this season**

[www.cnn.com/2018/11/19/health/flu-vaccine-children-study/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2018/11/19/health/flu-vaccine-children-study/index.html)

**In the news: Why is wombat poop cube-shaped?**

[www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/11/wombat-poop-cube-why-is-it-square-shaped/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/11/wombat-poop-cube-why-is-it-square-shaped/)

#### Infographic: All healthcare workers need flu vaccines



To view in full size, visit [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6738a2.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6738a2.htm).

#### Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

**Have a healthy and happy week!**

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